

Minutes\*

**Faculty Consultative Committee**  
**Thursday, September 26, 1996 (Part II)**  
**11:30 - 1:30**  
**Room 140 Nolte Center**

Present: Virginia Gray (chair), Victor Bloomfield, W. Andrew Collins, Sara Evans, Russell Hobbie, Laura Coffin Koch, Michael Korth, Fred Morrison, Harvey Peterson, Craig Swan

Regrets: Carl Adams, Carole Bland, Dan Feeney, Matthew Tirrell

Absent: Michael Steffes

Guests: Vice President Tom Swain (Institutional Relations)

Others: Maureen Smith (University Relations)

[In these minutes: Discussion of University relations with the community; committee business]

**2. Discussion with Vice President Tom Swain**

Following Professor Morrison's departure, Professor Gray turned to Mr. Swain to lead a discussion about Institutional Relations.

Mr. Swain inquired what the Committee would like to hear about. When told by Professor Gray, laughingly, that they would like to hear about "what miracles you're going to wreak" in the near future, he acknowledged that "that's one of the things that scares the dickens out of me; expectations are unreasonably high!"

Mr. Swain told the Committee of his background, and long history of connections between his family and the University (including a pledge by his grandfather toward helping the construction of Memorial Stadium and his participation, as a child, in studies conducted by the Institute of Child Development), his work with the Alumni Association as President and with the Foundation as a member of its Board of Trustees, his professional work in politics and in governmental relations while an executive with the St. Paul Companies, and the fact that he and all of his siblings as well as all of his children have degrees from the University.

Institutional Relations encompasses oversight responsibilities for the Alumni Association, the Foundation, the internal and external communications efforts, and various government and community affairs activities at the local, state, and national level. It is his background that probably led President Hasselmo to ask him to take on the job, Mr. Swain commented; his appointment is temporary, so that the position would be open for the new president. He wasn't looking for a full-time assignment, he said, but

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"if there is any institution, like the University, that needs help, there better be a reservoir of people like myself who are prepared to step up and help."

His assignment is clear: help prepare and coordinate and make as effective as possible the University's external communications in preparation for the upcoming session of the legislature and an effective presentation of the budget message, Mr. Swain related. Given his business background, there is also the hope that he might be able to reach out into some centers of influence and organize some positive help.

What he has observed so far, he said, is that this is an institution under stress (and this was before the most recent events). Why this happened is due to a variety of reasons, not the least of which is a local media disposed to focus on bad news and less inclined to talk about the good things. Part of that is because the University is in a large metropolitan area, where there is an inclination of too many to take the University for granted. Media attention to matters of University governance is very limited elsewhere in the Big Ten cities, whereas in the Twin Cities it is consistently high priority. This frequently generates stories of difference, confrontation, and dissension. Other communities recognize the great economic benefit and the tremendously positive benefits of their universities, and it is those benefits that receive the emphasis. In the Twin Cities, the University gets different treatment.

Mr. Swain discussed the unique way in which Governor Carlson seems to provide support to that which he likes, and pointed out that without the Governor's support, the University's budget message has little prospect of success. K-12 has increased needs and has a constituency among both parents and teachers that is powerful; MNSCU has 60-plus campuses, with 60 representatives and senators who realize the campuses are economically good for their districts. Health care, given the appropriate generosity of Minnesotans in helping to care for those who are unable to care for themselves, will consume more public money. Then there is the talk about the need to build more prisons and incarcerate more people. With the general disinclination to raise taxes, the situation makes for a tough road ahead.

In the view of one influential legislator, he reported, public resources are severely constrained. There will be no more money, so if the University is to sustain excellence, it must do something dramatic to cut back. Otherwise, it will continue to try to do too much. That is a view shared by others who do understand the University is going through constructive change that is improving undergraduate education. He related that he, as an outsider, is much impressed with the changes that have taken place.

One hears, Mr. Swain observed, that the pace of change at the University is glacial, and that internal resistance is "vicious." After 60 days on the job, he is convinced that change is significant. Whether it needs to be faster, or different, is not for him to say, but change is taking place at a level, according to the North Central Accreditation report, that may be more than the University can handle. But that view, that change is not occurring, is shared by a significant segment of a reasonably sophisticated community. Those people are being influenced by perception, but those perceptions are more important than reality when reality is not communicated effectively.

Mr. Swain related a conversation he had had with an influential group of Minnesotans. The members of this group had concluded that the University of Minnesota was not worth investing a single additional dollar in. The opinions of the group broke down as follows: 1/3 think the University's problems are so severe it should be left to decline; 1/3 think the problems are of such magnitude that they

are too difficult and the individuals should not become involved; there is 1/3 believe the University is far too critical to the state and its economy, culture, and people, that they cannot afford NOT to be involved. But right now, it is about a 2/3 - 1/3 division in one leadership group--based primarily on perceptions. This is part of what he faces, Mr. Swain concluded, and there is a long road ahead.

Members of the Board of Regents and others at the University talk about bad public relations. The shortest definition of public relations is "'doing good and getting credit for it.' If you don't do good, you've got no right to expect credit," he said. The University overwhelmingly does good, but more of the bad news seeps out than the good.

University Relations is a much, much different organization than it was 20 years ago. Mr. Swain recalled being asked by President Magrath 20 years ago to lead a committee to examine the reporting relationships of the University's external relationship units. That committee found in University Relations at the time that its obligation was to make sure that no untoward incident, no wart, should be suppressed, and all should hit the media. His committee inquired if there was not also a concomitant obligation to reach out and find out the GOOD things that are happening, what the people are achieving. University Relations did not believe that was part of their responsibility. That was astonishing to him, Mr. Swain said.

Things are very different now. There are staff at University Relations who reach out, college by college, to find out what is going on, week by week. One might not see evidence of this every day, and it may not be perfect, but it is an organized attempt to see that positive news is assembled and communicated. He sees all the news clippings, and there are few days when there are not two or three references to the faculty being called upon for their expertise; to imagine the state without the University raises visions of a "cold Omaha State."

One thing that perplexes him, he said, is the overall attitude, the disinclination of the faculty to be heard, and a willingness to help them talk more about good things, on a wide variety of fronts. Mr. Swain related how infrequently legislators are asked about their support for the University, and that when faculty (as constituents) are asked by legislators about their concerns, faculty concerns are the same as the "guy next door," and they never ask about support for the University. Why cannot the University get the 34,000 people who work for it to ask, of those who are running for the legislature, about University support? It does not take many queries like that before an elected official knows there is interest in a subject. The entire society takes the University too much for granted, and there is no depth of feeling for the institution like there is in St. Cloud or Mankato.

It is a rare time, if there is an issue about the University at hand, that he sees letters to the editor from faculty supporting the University unless it relates directly to the well-being of the faculty. Mr. Swain said [emeritus Regents' Professor] John Turner exemplifies what he means; John Turner would walk to Madison if he thought that would help the University. Many on this Committee would do the same, but there are not enough such faculty, he said. He said he understood that for faculty, their disciplines are most important, and how they are regarded nationally is a critical matter, but if these problems are going to be turned around, there is a need for organized activity on the part of the faculty when there is an organizational issue that is not being aired correctly and that is attracting too many critics inappropriately. The steam plant is illustrative; it could have been handled differently, but things happen one after another, so that outsiders respond by asking what is going on and saying things seem to

be totally out of control.

Professor Gray spoke to the question of why legislators do not hear from faculty. One does not know what faculty may say to their legislators on the telephone, but the faculty legislative liaison organizes coffee parties in districts so faculty members can talk with their legislators. Every legislator with six or more faculty had the opportunity to hear from faculty, and those continue. Mr. Swain said they are a good idea.

Professor Bloomfield noted that people talk about the need for "the faculty" to talk with legislators, and perhaps they should. What is bothersome is that the faculty do not make common cause with other employees of the University; there are a lot more of them than there are professors. Would such activity be effective, if it could be done?

Why "if," Mr. Swain inquired? What prevents it from happening? Probably class consciousness, Professor Bloomfield speculated. Professor Gray noted that even identifying and sorting faculty by legislative district is a mammoth task; to consider doing it for all University employees makes one tired thinking about it. But employees need to be told who their legislator is and how they can be reached. If that kind of organization is to occur, she told Mr. Swain, it will require a lot of resources.

Is that "simple" facilitating activity--matching University employees with their legislative districts--something that should be the responsibility of Institutional Relations, Professor Bloomfield inquired? Mr. Swain said he did not know; it certainly ought to be explored. It seems so simple. Another possibility would be a letter to all employees: "Have you talked to your legislator today?" Committee members suggested it would be worth a try.

Professor Bloomfield recalled that he had put a great deal of time into a letter to the editor from the Faculty Consultative Committee about the tenure troubles and the damage to the state that will occur because of the impact on the University; it was the first FCC response to the Regents' tenure proposals. He contacted Ms. Fluer about getting it distributed to the local and outstate newspapers; she agreed that it would be done. But it has appeared in no newspaper that he knows of, and he did not know if it went out. Mr. Swain said he would look into the matter, noting that is no assurance anything will be published. Professor Korth reported that one of the documents FCC had issued had appeared in the Morris newspaper. [It was the FCC statement.]

University Relations should be a vehicle to help process communications initiated by groups such as this Committee, Mr. Swain commented. Professor Bloomfield said that is what FCC had thought; if it was sent out, it appeared in few or no newspapers.

What about the case when the expression of opinion is adverse to that of the Board of Regents; does that not put his office in the middle, Mr. Swain was asked. It does, he said, but University Relations exists to serve the University constituency; that means the Board of Regents, the administration, and any other authorized group. The Board, he related, may not feel that University Relations is serving them very well, and he has taken steps to be sure that their needs are understood and met--because it would be hard to imagine WORSE public relations than to have the Board hire its own public relations agency. That would certainly look like a permanent schism. Mr. Swain assured the Committee that headway on this general subject is being made, and that University Relations is preparing the kinds of communication

vehicles that will best ensure their use; that does not put University Relations in the position of taking sides.

The general comment that has come out of FCC discussions, Professor Gray related, is that there is a need to get more good news out. A lot of that news would be about faculty research and awards and contributions to the economy and innovations in teaching. It is in this respect that the University is particularly lacking, and the faculty believe that if the University Relations focused more on learning what would be of interest to reporters, that would help change the image. The suggestion is that they are not doing enough, Mr. Swain concluded; Professor Gray agreed. Mr. Swain cautioned that just because there are communications people working with the colleges, there is no guarantee that the good news will make it out into the public.

Professor Evans told Mr. Swain that she was pondering his comments about legislators not hearing from faculty. It may be that more should be done, but there is also the legacy of many years of failure on the part of the University even to reach out to its alumni. Until recently, the colleges have done little fund-raising among alumni, and the faculty have not been asked to build relationships. Now a number of faculty are doing so, when asked, discovering that speaking to alumni groups is great fun. That is different from outreach to the legislature, but those kinds of efforts all come together, she said. There is something that needs joint work, including a greater sense of commonality as a University and where the linkages are with the state.

Mr. Swain recalled the history of the Alumni Association, and its refusal to permit any fund-raising with alumni. As a result of that, the University of Minnesota alumni still has the dubious distinction of having among the lowest percentage of donors among major institutions. The transition started during his presidency of the Alumni Association, he said; it was his entire mission to tell the alumni that they were extremely fortunate they had been able to enter the University and benefit from a taxpayer-subsidized education, and presumably do better for themselves. They need to think about the University the same way they think about their church and the cancer drive, he said. There has been headway made. The leadership, University advocacy, alumni programming, and communications from the Association have improved significantly.

Mr. Swain recalled the Minnesota Campaign of ten years ago; he had been asked to take the staff responsibility for managing it. He could not do so, but served as the volunteer chair of the CLA committee. CLA did not understand fund-raising in those days; they were babes in the woods in terms of infrastructure. But it was headed by an extremely capable person (who felt her academic career was being harmed because she was doing development work). CLA started with nothing, and there is now a reasonable effort underway. But that takes internal nurturing.

Professor Collins alluded to Mr. Swain's earlier comments about the division of opinion in one of the leading local influential groups. This is disturbing, but it is not surprising, he said, because he has been hearing from friends in the community that one member of the Board of Regents has been speaking frequently to civic and business groups, commenting openly on the sad state of affairs at the University and how poorly it is managed. These comments are generally seen to be drumming up support for making sure the University does not have an academic as president. There has been a lot of person-to-person work going on that has contributed to this division of opinion. Is there anything can be done about this? Is it something that should be given high priority?

Mr. Swain discussed this problem with the Committee, and said he is also going to discuss the situation with the President. He recalled that he was a member of the "blue ribbon" group ten years earlier that examined how regents were selected; it was a group of fine people. He also led the effort to have the Regent Candidate Advisory Council enacted into state law. The Alumni Association is now, again, in the process of scrutinizing the process, to learn if it is working.

It appears, said Professor Gray, if one considers a list of the individual and collective responsibilities of the Board, that few of the Board members, or the Board as a whole, are living up to those responsibilities. Mr. Swain said the task force had promulgated that list of responsibilities, and he had served on the Advisory Council for six years. If one compares those responsibilities to the recent reality, Professor Gray observed, it is a rather sad situation.

In terms of the faculty helping in external relations and making their work better known, Professor Bloomfield said, most faculty find that uncomfortable and foreign territory. They are not averse to helping, but recognize they are not very good at it and need assistance. If there were training sessions for faculty to help them deal with the media, and how to help University Relations put together a story that would be of interest, the faculty could be more helpful. He said he also had the feeling that the University News Service focuses primarily on the local and state media. If a faculty member does something good, and it is published in an international journal or the news magazine of the profession, it is only picked up locally through the back door. There are certain universities that are very good at what is noticed in this way; they find ways to present these findings and activities more effectively locally.

Mr. Swain and the Committee discussed the ways in which a better communication effort from the University along these lines might be developed, and he promised to pursue the matter. It might be useful for a group of faculty to sit down with people from University Relations, Professor Bloomfield suggested.

Professor Collins cautioned that one should not be naive about this, however, because media people have strong feelings about what "news" is, and much of the time when information is provided to them, they do not regard it as "news." That is a judgment they have to make. Part of the work to be done, Professor Evans pointed out, is providing the information in such a way that it IS news; it is from places like the professional journals that the New York Times picks things up. The faculty have to help create forms of visibility that validate, for the local media, the proposition that what faculty do is really news.

Do not some of the colleges have their own communications specialists, Mr. Swain inquired? One has also to look at timing and opportunity; one recent (albeit gruesome) example was the TWA crash. When it happened, the University again released information about the invention of the "black box" at Minnesota. Some of the media picked up on it; some did not. There has also been a lot in the media about registering on the World Wide Web; they finally picked up on it and gave it great play. Media representatives were on campus for three days, and they did a tremendous job of making it come alive.

Some of the critics of the University don't want to hear about things such as overcoming the impersonality of the institution; they want to know what the problems are and what the University is doing to correct them. The only way to do that, Mr. Swain said, is to talk about "where you were, where

you are, where you want to be, what it will take to get there, and the terms on which you are prepared to be measured in outcomes." That is the way the communication on the budget is being developed. There is an external constituency that likes to see things structured in a way that shows increased accountability in terms of specifics. Graduation rate is an example; Mr. Swain said he understood the debate about the propriety of using graduation rate as a measure of the University, but if the University's rate is lower than everyone else's, and everyone is fixing their attention on it, the University is compelled to suggest that it wants to improve.

The Committee discussed with Mr. Swain--with some asperity--the example of Sid Hartman in terms of the impact of the media on the University.

The Committee also discussed with Mr. Swain the statements and implications in the Gillmor-Finnegan article that appeared in the Star-Tribune recently. Mr. Swain noted that the University is behind Wisconsin in fund-raising, for example. He pointed out, however, that in the population of public research universities, Michigan is first, Wisconsin is second, and Minnesota is third--Minnesota is not exactly backsliding, and has done a very good job. For those on the outside, who are fed bad news (as with the Gillmor-Finnegan article), it reinforces the stereotype of an institution in decline. That does not mean everyone has to be a cheerleader, but when perceptions are negative, it takes concentrating on the good things to get views turned around. That is especially true when some of those people are the ones whose influence the University needs for support.

At some point, Mr. Swain asked, are the taxpayers of Minnesota going to be willing to step up to bat and do what they've done before, in terms of financing a high quality higher education institution? Minnesota is the smallest state that supports a top 30 research university, and that support has been slipping. In the minds of some, however, Minnesota has done a good job. Are people willing to consider what the effect of NOT having a vibrant, first-rate research university would mean? One can make a clear case that the economy and lives of Minnesotans would slip appreciably without it. People have to understand that if they want to keep things first class, they have to step up and be willing to do more. But can that be accomplished when there is too much attention paid to the slipping and sliding?

One of the things that the faculty feel desperate about is the need to communicate to the Regents the danger of what they are doing, how much their behavior is damaging the University, Professor Evans said. There is a wish to say that this is real, and that people are leaving or not coming, that searches are being damaged. That is an utterly different audience from the general public.

The communication with the external audiences has to be done the right way, Professor Gray observed. One faculty member related an incident that occurred when the editorial writers from one of the local newspapers were given a tour. At the end, they were taken to a faculty member's lab, and were very impressed with the demonstration--and then someone from the University commented that "this is the kind of person who may leave because of the tenure dispute." The light went on at that point, she said; people imagine that bad people will leave, but when one has an example of a good faculty member might leave, then they understand. Another example is the article in the DAILY about what tenure means to students; all they have to do is think of their most favorite professor. That is the person who may leave. It is the best people who will leave, Professor Gray concluded.

What Mr. Swain is telling the Committee, Professor Bloomfield summarized, is that they may say

that "IF we are not careful, bad things will happen to the University, and that will damage the state." What that cannot say is that "we have not been careful, bad things have ALREADY happened to the University, and the state is in severe trouble."

Mr. Swain said he wouldn't make such a broad generalization, but when the perceptions outside are negative, and they are fueled and reinforced, that does not help. The question is, if it's down, is that a signal that will convince people they must do something actively to turn it around? Or if it is good, and one likes to be on board with a winner, is that the signal that is needed? Because they have to keep things right? By and large, people like to ride with a winner, he said; if too much of the negative is communicated, and people are not sure what it takes to change it, and they hear conflicting messages, that is when they say the problem is too difficult.

Professor Gray thanked Mr. Swain for spending time with the Committee; he said he enjoyed the opportunity. He observed with a laugh that no one could accuse him of taking on the responsibility in order to advance his career; he urged Committee members to call or write to him with any thoughts they might have. Professor Gray promised they would.

### **3. Committee Business**

#### COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS

Professor Gray said that reports from committee chairs would be made; in the absence of Professors Feeny and Morrison (the latter of whom distributed a written summary), Professor Koch reported for SCEP.

Professor Koch reported that semesters would continue to be on the agenda, and it would also try to finish the job of reviewing and revising all of the Senate educational policies. The grading policy will go before the Campus Assembly in October, and represents the consolidation of many existing policies; a similar one will be presented concerning classes and schedules and exams. The undergraduate course and curriculum committee will be brought back to the Assembly; the more that people work on semesters, the more convinced they are that there is a need for a campus-wide faculty body to oversee the semester curriculum development. The Committee will also work on developing an award for contributions to graduate and professional education, parallel to the Morse-Alumni award, will consider grade inflation, will look at reorganization, and will also discuss RCM.

Professor Koch said SCEP will also take up the issue of making faculty course evaluation results accessible to students, at the request of Senior Vice President Marshak, something in which the students are very interested. (At present the peer evaluation portion of the policy specifically precludes making the results public.) Committee members discussed this last item for a short while, and expressed views generally unfavorable to the proposal. SCEP had also held a very preliminary discussion, Professor Koch commented, and was not favorably disposed to the idea.

It appears that the deadlines for semesters may be set back one quarter, Professor Koch said in response to a query. The need for quality work, and the need to equalize the amount of available faculty time among colleges that have faculty on A and B appointments.

#### APPOINTMENT TO A GRANTS COMMITTEE

Professor Gray reported that she has been asked to nominate a faculty member to serve on a committee to distribute money to academic programs from the Coke contract. At present the committee is composed entirely of non-academics, people totally uninvolved in academic programs; the chair, however, realized that there should be academic involvement.

She said she does not approve of this kind of activity, which seems to be totally unrelated to other efforts to improve instruction at the University. It is disconnected from everything, and simply represents throwing money around. It is also another call for people to write proposals, Professor Evans said, and the funds should be funneled through existing groups. FCC should also lobby to have the effort moved into to routine channels. Professor Koch suggested that perhaps it could be incorporated in SCEP, in a fashion parallel to the way SCEP decides on the recipients of the Morse-Alumni award.

It was suggested that the nominee should come either from the Committee on Educational Policy or somewhere in the Arts, Sciences, and Engineering, or perhaps the Council on Liberal Education. It was also agreed that Professor Gray would write to Vice President Boston questioning the arrangement.

#### CROOKSTON DISCUSSION

Professor Gray commented on the discussion the Committee had heard at Crookston, and closed the meeting to air views about what they had heard.

The Committee considered if it should take any action; Professor Gray took instruction from the Committee.

#### MINUTES DISTRIBUTION

Professor Gray said she had asked to have the minutes of FCC on the World Wide Web, but did not realize that FCC had twice voted against having its minutes on the web. The original reason for not putting the minutes on Gopher, and now the Web, was because the Committee tends to discuss issues over several meetings, and for anyone to "drop in" on one set of minutes to read a discussion summary could be misleading.

Committee members discussed the format of the minutes, and agreed that they should be somewhat more succinct when reporting on general Committee discussion. It was noted, however, that anything on the Web is accessible to anyone around the world, and the minutes could be indexed on Yahoo and other search tools.

The Committee concluded that to put the minutes on the web is to invite mischief. Normally, one urges people to be more open, Professor Korth observed, but with the Web one must be more careful, because the uses to which the material will be put is uncontrollable and unpredictable.

Professor Evans moved that the staff be asked to move toward more succinct minutes, and that the minutes not be on the Web until they are in a form that the Committee is comfortable with. The motion was seconded and unanimously adopted.

This decision does not apply to other Senate committees; it is up to them to decide what disposition to make of their minutes.

#### RESPONSE TO A LETTER

Professor Hobbie inquired how he should respond to a colleague, who took issue with the position taken by the Committee, in its recent statement on collective bargaining, about the Faculty Senate tenure code revisions: "The Committee also remains committed to supporting the tenure proposals presented in June to the Board of Regents by the Faculty Senate." The contention was made that many faculty no longer support those proposals.

Professor Evans observed that the Committee operates on the assumption that "the faculty" now believes in the proposal that went forward to the Regents; that is likely not an accurate statement of how the whole faculty stands. That document went through the process, and something the faculty would accept as a compromise, but there is a sense that the compromise went further than some would prefer.

There is also a concern, it was pointed out, that the Faculty Senate proposal will become the STARTING POINT for a discussion, with a compromise position between it and the proposal from the Board of Regents. The Committee needs to be careful about positioning itself.

The statement only said that the Committee continues to support the Faculty Senate proposal, Professor Gray pointed out. The Committee was not talking about a negotiating position that a union might take; that might indeed be very different.

The final question in the message, Professor Hobbie observed, was that if it does not violate the cease and desist order to support the Faculty Senate proposals, would it violate the order to support the 1985 tenure code? That goes to the point that Professor Morrison has made with the Committee, it was said; the order constrains the administration and Regents, not the faculty. The faculty might be able to rescind the action.

Committee members discussed the prevailing views of the Faculty Senate tenure proposals adopted last spring. Most Committee members supported the Faculty Senate action, because they endorsed the contents, not because they were forced to vote for them. It is understandable why anyone organizing a union would NOT support them, at this point, but it takes the FCC statement out of context to link it to collective bargaining negotiations. The Committee was NOT urging the Board of Regents to take unilateral action on the Faculty Senate proposals, however; it was supporting the process. The point was that the Board COULD adopt those proposals if it wished to, although it may not wish to.

It was agreed that the Committee would make no additional statement with respect to collective bargaining at this time.

Professor Gray then adjourned the meeting at 1:45.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota